

Instructions for Sending Specimens for Neurologic Surveillance and Testing

Initiated in March 2012, Neurologic Surveillance and Testing is designed to provide enhanced diagnostic testing and consultation for cases of unexplained neurologic illnesses that are presumed to be of infectious origin. NST is the result of coordination between the Communicable Disease Emergency Response (CDER) Branch and the Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory (VRDL) at the California Department of Public Health.

Cases that will be considered for testing include those who meet the following criteria:

Clinical Characteristics	Rapidly progressive encephalitis, paralysis with associated encephalitis, neurologic illness with associated rash, OR unexplained culture negative meningitis that appears to be bacterial.
Exposures	Epi-links to other case(s) of neurologic illness; foreign travel ≤ 3 weeks; animal bite/scratch (especially wildlife); thought to be related to a recent immunization (≤ 4 weeks); significant mosquito or tick exposure (e.g. outdoor activities in non-urban areas)
Unexplained Neuro-Deaths	Hallmarks of infection (e.g. fever, rash, CSF pleocytosis); in particular, pediatric deaths

Testing will be tailored to each case as determined by clinical picture, laboratory values, and exposure history. Please note that anti-NMDA receptor testing is NOT performed at VRDL.

In order to send samples to NST for testing, ALL of the following requirements must be met:

1. Physicians must obtain approval **PRIOR TO** the submission of patient samples. This can be accomplished by filling out the NST case history form and sending it via fax or email to 916-440-5940 or NeuroSurveillance@cdph.ca.gov. You will be notified if your case is appropriate to send.
2. A completed 2-page Case History Form and Specimen Submittal Form must be sent along with a **full set** of specimens. **Required** samples are:
 - ☐ CSF (2-3cc)
 - ☐ Acute Serum (2-3cc in red or tiger top tube)
 - ☐ NP/Throat swab (in viral transport)Additional samples may be requested, such as a rectal swab, stool, or convalescent serum. Tissues will be requested for autopsy cases, and additional samples may be requested for suspect rabies cases.
3. The local public health department must be notified of all cases submitted for testing. Note that, regardless of our involvement, encephalitis and meningitis are reportable conditions in California as per Title 17, Section 2500.

*****Note that samples will not be tested unless all requirements are met*****

Once a case has been approved and the above requirements met, samples can be shipped via an overnight courier such as FedEx or GSO to the address below. Packages should be sent for delivery Monday through Friday only.

**ATTN: Specimen Receiving
Neurologic Surveillance and Testing
Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Richmond, CA 94804**

For questions, please call Heather Sheriff at (510) 307-8608.